

# County uses HAVA funds to increase voter accessibility

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The distribution of \$5,000 in Help America Vote Act (HAVA) funding is helping the Putnam County Clerk's Office increase voter accessibility in the county.

Secretary of State Connie Lawson recently visited with Clerk Marty Watts, and the two discussed the county's use of the funds distributed by Lawson's office.

"I want to commend Marty for applying for the grant because Putnam County is receiving \$5,000," Lawson said.

Watts said some of the money will go to the basic purposes of purchasing signs for polling places and handicap parking signs for sites that don't normally have such spaces.

The bigger project, though, is increasing accessibility to the courthouse. One precinct votes inside the courthouse, and it is also the site of 30 days of absentee voting before each election.

While the east side of the courthouse has a handicap ramp, the door is heavy and remains a hindrance to disabled citizens.

Watts said she plans to use the money to make the doors accessible to those with mobility issues.

"I thought that would be a wonderful thing to do," Watts said. "I think it will be a benefit year round.

Congress passed HAVA in response to issues raised in various parts of the country during the 2000 Presidential Election. This year represents the final cycle of HAVA funding.

"As Indiana's chief election officer, I am committed to ensuring that all Hoosiers have access to their polling place," Lawson said. "This grant money will provide local governments with much needed assistance to ensure polling locations are handicap accessible and provide the best possible service to Hoosier voters."

The helpfulness of the grant to Putnam County was not lost on Watts.

"I hope to make improvements that will help all voters in Putnam County," Watts said. "This is a godsend to the county to have those funds available.

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